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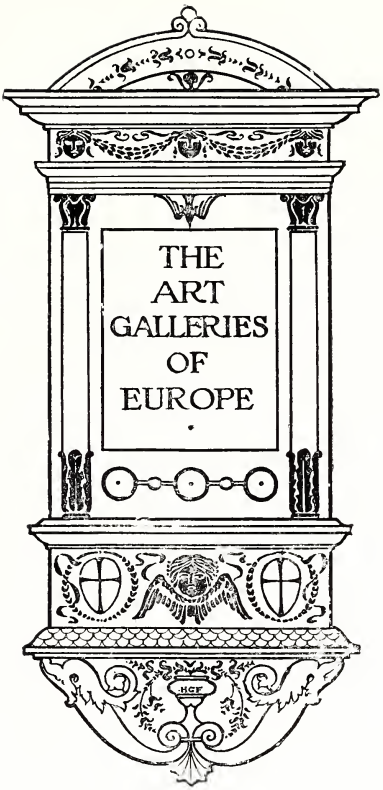

THE NATIONAL GALLERY
LONDON
THE SPANISH, FRENCH AND GERMAN SCHOOLS

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From the painting by Holbein

Photo Hanfstaengl

THE AMBASSADORS

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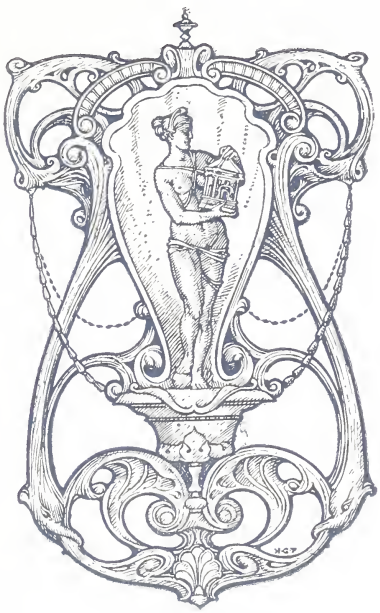
THE SPANISH, FRENCH, AND GERMAN SCHOOLS



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THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

SPANISH, FRENCH, AND GERMAN SCHOOLS

BY WALTER BAYES

INTRODUCTORY

IN a publication of this sort, in which the different Schools represented in a collection are entrusted to different writers, it might seem at first sight desirable that each should be treated by some one persuaded that his particular School represented the ultimate fine flower of artistic achievement. Yet such monotonous panegyrics were in reality hardly consistent with a broadly just presentment, and for my own part I confess that I do not see in either of the three Schools, of which I have to treat, examples of such happy perfection. That is not to say, however, that there is not to be found in them much that is in the highest degree admirable and instructive in another way, and indeed if we realise their true place in the history of Art instructive in quite a special degree to ourselves.

To the visitor who takes the rooms of the National Gallery in their numerical order, the French and Spanish and later Italian rooms will have, I think, a slight flavour of stuffiness. It is not that he is tired; the National Gallery does not tire one like the Royal Academy, but he has a sense that Art is no longer quite a spontaneous thing, it has become professional, and the jaded feeling that haunts picture-dealers' shops begins to take possession of him. In Italy the growth and waning of the Art impulse was like that of the life instinct in a human being, and in

the rooms devoted to the youth of the Italian School we see the young creature grasping vigorously for its heart's desire, with an unerring instinct that will accept nothing but the one thing inherently right for it. Just as human history is a record of the conflict of this perpetually resurgent force with the dull obstruction of facts, and of its ultimate taming by them into compromise until the efforts of middle age seem to envisage less the desired than the obtainable, so something of this low caution creeps into Art in its later days.

This it is that oppresses the visitor with a sense of staleness. He feels it before the slightly unambitious and methodical canvases of Canaletto and Vernet, he feels it before Poussin's rather professional gambollings *in the manner of Titian* indeed, but hardly *as* Titian: Yet —may we confess it ?—with this sense of lower ideals comes a feeling of greater security. The man that is astonished and a little humiliated before Titian, that gasps at Botticelli, feels more at ease here, fancies even, if he be a painter, that he might at a pinch do this sort of thing himself. And there can be little doubt that he is right, that this later Art *is* more within our ken, who also are a middle-aged and prudent generation, and herein is the special interest and encouragement to us of these French and Spanish Rooms. It cannot but be that Art viewed in its larger movements should pass through successive cycles, overlapping perhaps, but still recognisable as having each its period of youth, maturity and decline, and it cannot be that every one should be born at the auspicious moment on the crest of the wave. To us, therefore, that are not so lucky, there is comfort in watching the men of another period who, living at a time when the current of artistic inspiration was beginning to run slow, yet contrived, some of them, to cheat staleness of its due, and there is instruction in seeing how a movement that has spent its force at home may ripen abroad into a talent of the delicacy and freshness of Claude, or even culminate in one of the great artists of the world such as Spain possesses in Velasquez.

There is a couple of small heads ascribed to Clouet and one or two other minor works in the French Room which, together with the bulk of the German work (the German school, owing to the exigencies of publishing, falls within the scope of this volume and is treated later), are obviously more or less primitive in character and do not enter into the same category, but in the bulk of the French and Spanish pictures the interest is the same, and it is well at the outset to realise its nature. In neither country was there a native Art impulse growing up with the nation. Both borrowed from Italy their Art ready made, and borrowed at a time when Art was already declining in that country. Both offer to us an inspiriting spectacle—that of a series of gallantly contested rear-guard actions in an age of decadence ; and just as in warfare the successful conduct of a rearguard action calls for the highest quality of a soldier, so the men who emerged from a slipshod and vulgar and mercantile period with work that was strong and accomplished and refined, that

retained their spontaneity when handicapped by the dead weight of complex possibilities and multitudinous "expected accomplishments" which the accumulated centuries pile on an artist's back, must, it may be suggested, have been men of robuster personality and had characters of tougher fibre than we need predicate for the men born in the golden age in more inspiring *milieu* and to a simpler art. We may envy the latter their good fortune, to these we cannot refuse the tribute of whole-hearted admiration as they fight their battle against odds with varying success and in such varying manner. There is Velasquez, the calm, the wise. Yes, he retreats, moves to a lower position, his painting is more an affair of representation, less of creation, than the great earlier masters had aimed at, but what self-restraint and dignity! Never had any retreat less of defeat in it: he but moves to a position more unassailable, more philosophic. There is Lorrain, of slenderer talent, of happier serenity, who contents himself with concentrating his efforts in a smaller issue, spends a talent of considerable youth and freshness in elaborating and finishing a landscape idea borrowed from Titian's backgrounds, giving much freshness to a task not in itself very fresh. There is Canale and his follower Vernet, not at bottom very original, but creating a diversion by the ingenious little manœuvre of exploiting fresh and topical subjects, by introducing the interest of literal and immediate truthfulness in externals, an interest not to be denied, and in some instances of unexpected poignancy. There is Poussin, the prudent, the respecter of precedent, dignified, not lightly to be shaken by panic out of his well-considered principles; and there is El Greigo, bitter and reckless, *la mort aux yeux*, taking almost a perverse pleasure in gazing on inevitable defeat.

And not only is it instructive to see the *qualities* that make success possible in such circumstances, but the besetting *sins* of such a period have a bearing on ourselves that is almost too acutely personal to be comfortable. We shall see it breeding, whether in Spain or France, the flabby sentimentalism of Murillo or Greuze, high priests of the mawkish, still, be it noted, surrounded by worshippers. These alone of our painters have no misgivings as to the difficulty of their task—nay, is not the period pre-eminently favourable to them? Murillo in particular seems marked out by Nature for expressing a certain state of soul, that of the man worn out by several generations of dissipation, enfeebled to the point of acquiring a semblance of the Christian virtues because lacking the virility for the practice of their corresponding vices, a lassitude enlivened alternately by mawkish self-pity and smug self-satisfaction. Here, also, there is something for us to learn even at the cost of some frankness concerning work that has been long accepted, for the proverb "*de mortuis*" was never intended so to apply to painters as to surround the work of the past with a halo of humbug and pretended admiration.

THE SPANISH PICTURES

A CERTAIN compact quality which makes the National Gallery, in comparison with many larger collections, an assemblage of masterpieces (a quality, by the way, which it is worth while jealously to preserve) is very noticeable in the Spanish Room. There are twenty-eight canvases in all, yet Spain is royally represented and, to the visitor who in conservative fashion takes the rooms in consecutive order, they offer a refreshing tonic after the somewhat stale and tawdy glories of Baroccio or the Caracci. It is the fashion to ascribe this impression to Velasquez, and certainly it cannot be denied that it is Velasquez that is the main feature. It is, however, with a lesser painter than Don Diego that I propose to commence these notes. The most refreshing picture of all to my mind after the sloppy bombast that rather too plentifully flavours the last room is Zurbaran's portrait of a lady as St. Margaret, that hangs on the other side of the door from Velasquez' famous head of Philip, and even before that formidable comparison serenely holds its own. Almost more than holds its own in fact, for the filmy mysterious web of Velasquez' paint seems a little vapoury and weak beside the native strength and forethought simplicity of its neighbour, in which seems to survive something of the grit and force of earlier painting. Beside the Zurbaran, which is almost like a life-sized Van Eyck, the Velasquez—name synonymous for certain modern critics with trenchant and vigorous handling—seems almost unvirile and poeticised work. Contemporary painters of the same Spanish School, there is a gulf between them, and it is worth while to inquire in what consists Zurbaran's merit.

In our progress through the other Galleries we have been aware of, and my *confrères* who have written on them have very probably pointed out, a very general tendency in painting as it grows older; a tendency, namely, to speak more and more in terms of "effect" as we call it nowadays, to become absorbed in the interlacing web of light and shadow that constitutes at any given moment our vision of the world, and so doing to lose the interest in the concrete "thing" which is so characteristic of Art in its earlier period. The simple contour of the figure as a whole that at first supported and brought together the smaller drawing (in a manner which we sometimes call conventional but might perhaps more reasonably term philosophic) now blends by degrees into the background, and these smaller and more fretted forms emerge into greater salience, filling the frame less amply and with forms less intrinsically noble than in the earlier Art which was designed on lines more closely parallel with natural construction, and in which in the painting of the details themselves there was something of the same near parallelism whereby the slight variety

of quality resulting from the very manner in which the paint is put on the canvas, trailed or twisted or splodged or smeared, tallies closely with a similar modulation in the actual detail represented, so that the very stroke itself becomes by a miracle of imitative conciseness, a leaf, an eyebrow, a finger. The later painter's manner of dealing not in *things* with their crisp and definite characteristics but in the shadowy *appearances* of things, does not at first seem to lend itself to quite the same dynamic quality, and you may see a painter, as in the *Christ at the Column*, attributed to Velasquez, walking round his forms with an elaborately logical but very dull system of variously lighted planes in a highly mechanical and dogged fashion that almost earns for him that epithet so hard, yet with a germ of truth in it, " the discoverer of photography."

Across the door by which we have entered is the battle engaged between the old painting and the new, a battle by no means unequal, though Zurbaran even in this extraordinarily fine example is by no means the greatest of his kind, while Velasquez is at his hours—and this is one of them—a supreme painter of appearances. The older painter would make you a man in paint as vigorously as paint will do it. The other shows you a man as Nature herself shows him revealed by the magic of light bathed in a silvery atmosphere—and thinking of this atmosphere we might add, will in years to come render his every characteristic in less and less salient fashion, allowing the painting to become soft and undecided in touch, and the colour greyer and greyer, till ultimately a picture becomes too dingy a thing to stand the challenge of any richly toned object like a cabinet in marquetry or a silken curtain, and its owners are obliged to decorate their rooms throughout in two tones of pale delicate colour to allow the painting to emerge (a type of decoration particularly ill-suited to modern city life with its splendour, its complexity, and its grime). Thinking of this atmosphere, which will come to be regarded as the only poetry of paint, we shall reproach most illogically this earlier, more constructive Art with being " literal."

This is the direction in which Velasquez, in his head of Philip, points the way, yet with a keen sense of the danger of the change of front. Never was there a more cautious revolutionary. He is keenly sensible of the perils of that contour merged in the background, and of how necessary it is that the facts of Nature should strike you somewhat in the order of their philosophic importance—the part, not to the exclusion of the whole—and hence he is usually careful to paint indoors under circumstances which allow the light, which dictates appearances, to be itself somewhat under the control of the artist. Nor can it be said that in his best work, or in that of others of the great masters of chiaroscuro such as Rembrandt, that there is quite a loss of that dynamic quality of touch that I have claimed as a quality of the earlier painters. The stroke is now a reflected ray of light, not a concrete thing, but it may be in as subtle sympathy with what it represents, only, as might be expected, more disentegrated and vague, less incisive. Necessarily, too, the Philip, as a picture that aims a

being like intangible air, is conceived in a narrower gamut than that of Zurbaran, who luxuriates in the full power of his pigments used in full and handsome quality; and here behind Zurbaran we see, I think, not the Italians, not a vein of quite indigenous effort proper to Spain, but a reflection of some early Flemish painter. Perhaps Alva pillaged the Netherlands not quite in vain, perhaps Van Eyck, who is supposed to have travelled to Spain, may be reputed as great grandfather to the canvas. Nothing else I have seen by Zurbaran is quite as good, though the *Adoration of the Shepherds* alongside (recently a Velasquez, so various are the fates) has fine fragments, notably the foreground, with the lambs so finely done that one would like to think of them as by Zurbaran, himself of peasant origin.

It was such conservatism in not a few Spanish and French painters that prevented Art in these countries from running quite the same disastrous course as in Italy, and even in Velasquez, the founder of modern painting, it is very noticeable. In the fine Pulido Pareja, for all its modern appearance, the simple silhouetting of the figure is quite in the traditional taste, though explained by the lighting instead of deliberately chosen in defiance of probabilities as one might find in earlier painters. In the *St. Margaret* Zurbaran evidently keeps his masses together because he felt that this represented the general truth of Nature, and he preferred to eliminate momentary effects of light; perhaps also he had not quite the agile mind capable of mastering and utilising fresh ideas.

Of this Velasquez was capable in a very high degree; always ready to learn, he yet followed others for the most part with infinite discretion. Never was greater liberty or greater self-restraint, and these two qualities so typical of his large mature character are writ large in his paint. To hold a line firmly from end to end of a canvas is not easy, but it is doubly difficult if you paint like Velasquez in liquid paint with almost the whole of the picture fluent together. Other painters in this large and liquid fashion have owed something of that effect to a kind of caligraphic instinct for the stroke like a writing-master's flourish, sweeping true with a beauty of its own apart from its truth as rendering the line of a figure, and one sometimes hears Velasquez included among such dashing painters. This is surely a mistake—always grave and self-contained, always level-headed, he sticks severely to the material before him. Compare even the Pulido Pareja with the most refined of Rubens's portraits, say the *Chapeau de poil*, and you will see how literal Velasquez is beside the fantastic and delightful composition of flirts and curls and trills, the sprightliest of painters' gymnastics into which Rubens resolves a face.

The most free of all Velasquez' pictures and the one into which enter the most of such airy gymnastics is the very fine *Betrothal*, painted evidently under the influence of Tintoret. Here we see the modern idea of painting by "effect" turned to its proper use in rendering not the single figure but the group. Of all Velasquez' works this is the least a photograph, the most a creation flowing from the painter's mind, and revealing his character for that very reason the more completely. If

here he were inclined to design a great flourish of line across the canvas there is no model in front of him to pull him up with the suggestion of another more closely expressive. Alike in the method of painting with its great thin semi-transparent washes of colour, and in the subject which he seems to have evolved out of his inner consciousness—seen as a vision rather than in actual fact, here is Velasquez in completest liberty. And yet was ever anything more measured, more quiet? Not a stroke that is impulsive, of which the thought that actuated it finishes in the doing of that stroke alone; you cannot look at any part of the picture save in a kind of suspense that may not be satisfied till you have followed through the idea of which it is a part. There are more beautiful pieces of paint at the National Gallery than this, which, beautiful as it is, would seem thin beside a really luxurious piece of colour, but there are not many, if there is one, that gives a greater sense of sustained intellectual power. It is the painting of a man who sees much and is not confused, knows much and is not dismayed, and even hung as it is, where reflection makes it almost invisible, and surrounded as it is by a most odious frame, it breathes an air of freshness and serenity that makes it one of the strongest arguments in favour of modern painting that one can bring to bear against the transcendental admirers of primitive art.

In spheres less abstract, *The Boar Hunt* offers a splendid example of grouping of more picturesque character, in which, however, it appears to me impossible to really appreciate the fine quality of these foreground groups and to see the landscape at the same time. The former in robust vigorous colour, with the touch of the modern and the colour-pitch of the ancient Art, furnishes us with an admirable example to follow. Thus, were we but big enough, might we treat modern life in decorative fashion and with a full rich palette, without affectation of archaism, and keeping closely in touch with reality. Few pictures that were ever painted, in fact, have been closer in touch with immediate realities than these groups in the foreground, and the refreshment of this contact with life reacts on the spectator. It is like taking a trip abroad. The round-faced yokel standing at the head of the sturdy red mustang, is not finer than the dog he holds, a crop-eared tyke with little piggy eyes. The vigorous pose of the man holding the pair of hounds (drawn in back-view, but in such characteristic fashion as to be a portrait), the genial grey-headed chap bent over the wounded dog, the dogs themselves, the man with his thumbs in his belt (is it Philip?), a cynic taking pleasure in his own biting humour but caught at a moment of unusual happiness, all are rendered in a manner that expresses the most delightful side of sport, is full of the ease and healthfulness and leisure of out-door life. The least technical spectator cannot but feel how the manner of the execution, the full luxurious paint, the firm direct handling so succinct and to the point, without being too close packed for ease, enforce this impression. The bold flood of light as of a late afternoon sun in full summer has here a right to be one of the principal personages in the picture,

and the "painting by effect" that is to become the modern painting is finely justified. Yet here and there we find a wise reversion to the old convention of the silhouette rather arbitrarily flattened, which stands for something in the terseness of the effect which saves these groups from any suspicion of the sloppiness that infected so much seventeenth century painting. What saves it above all, though, is that return to Nature that critics have always so rightly prescribed as the remedy for a worn-out generation, and the same return to Nature was at the bottom of most of the successes in this and the next generation whether in Italy or France. We have seen this close literalism backed by a narrower outlook, produce such a minor masterpiece as Canale's *View in Venice* (No. 927)—(if I may cite a picture not really belonging to the School I am writing on, but closely akin to it)—a picture that is particularly to be recommended to those students for whom "breadth" is synonymous with emptiness. We shall see also in the French Room Lenain with a similar narrow concentration, but even more wistful intensity, painting pictures one is bound to respect, while even Vernet, a rather uninspired follower of Canale, does work that is interesting in its way.

But we are not yet through with our Velasquez. Balancing the great Admiral is a full length Philip, which strikes one as a replica commenced by pupils and finished by the master, parts of the costume being almost finer in execution than in the Pulido Pareja, the head tame and perfunctory compared to that splendid representation of transpontine villainy; while a curious picture, not artistically of the first importance, is the *Christ in the House of Martha*, painted in his tight earlier manner, except the figures in the distance, which are like a picture on the wall painted by another hand: these seem as though they had been re-painted by some very clever Frenchman, and are much freer in handling. A rather doubtful *View in the Prado*, resembles in its dinginess the landscape part of the boar hunt, but with nothing of the grandeur that makes the latter the worthy forerunner of much of the very best of modern landscape painting, and the well-known *Orlando Muerto*, complete the list of pictures ascribed to Velasquez. This latter is so thin a piece of colour that one hesitates to accept the name offered. Parts of it, like the head, however, are "walked round" by the same rather photographic rendering of planes that we noticed in the *Christ at the Column*. The *Christ at the Column* represents Velasquez in rather a stupid phase, his having passed through which perhaps accounts for the kindly way in which he is alleged to have treated so inferior a painter as Murillo: He had past sins of his own whose recollection taught him to make allowances for others. Here a certain flaccid and nerveless quality of form is emphasised by the fact that the picture balances a very expressively drawn and nobly composed work by Ribera. Compare but the loin cloth on Velasquez' Christ with the similar drapery on the Ribera. The one so wanting in economy, noting many variations in contour but failing to co-ordinate them into anything expressing finely the spring and weight, and pressure of drapery;

the other so strong and delicate, the detail so momentous, united in so strong a current of movement. Note the simplicity and restraint of the figure of Ribera's Christ, the stiffness of the pose that gives such touching value to the so slight drop-over of the head and to the loosely open hands. See, too, the power expressed in the figure bowed over the feet. Here at least is dramatic design, which we look for in vain in the *Christ at the Column*, where there is, however, plenty of action that verbally described might *sound* dramatic. The Christ is drooping, the Child is posing, the Angel is pointing, but there is none of the economy of line that with Ribera might make these facts spring upon us with a new poignancy. Think how in the figure of Christ the lines might all have been subordinated to the dreadful straight pull of the arms where the weight drags on the cut wrists, and see how Velasquez paints his Christ in very much the same fashion as the sentimental child in its soft and tender attitude, and with pretty much the same liquid-eyed sentimentality of expression. After this, I must confess, while admitting for it a certain professional ability that it is not over easy to match, it is almost a relief to turn even to the furious and ill-balanced work of El Greigo, which at least aims at expression of a sort. This is hung in interesting juxtaposition to Velasquez' *Betrothal*, the one a Tintoretto ennobled by its translation, the other a Tintoretto gone mad.

The two big Murillos are, I fear, the most popular pictures in the room. My dislike of these is so great that I content myself with admitting the considerable native ability they display, notably in such a fragment as the head of the lamb, which suggests the happy sloshiness of Morland: there is also a good passage of sky in the same picture. It is melancholy to see the Murillo taint of sentimentality reappearing in some of Sir Joshua's children, and Sir Joshua, one fancies, must have known better. Among the remaining pictures, Valdes Leal strikes one as an accommodating person who was asked to combine in one picture the merits of Velasquez and Murillo. As might be expected, he succeeded better with the latter. Balancing the *Betrothal*, his wretched fly-away figure lost in a wilderness of background makes a poor show compared with the Velasquez, with its firm square disposition of masses supporting and consolidating the frame.

Matching not unworthily as an historical type Velasquez' swaggering Buccaneer, is the *Dr. Péral* of Goya. The romantic idea of the leading spirit of the French Revolution, the type suggested by Carlyle's "Sea-green uncorruptible," is here painted for us by a painter as picturesque in character as himself, a kind of plebeian Mirabeau. He is realised in silky paint and rather superficial modelling, and with infinite *finesse* of observation, one of the finest of Goya's portraits I have seen, the crooked mouth giving the face an amazing character. The other examples are scarcely worthy of a painter who stands here in a category by himself as not so much a fine artist making the best of a decadent period, but a fiery revolutionary unconsciously clearing the way for a new one.

THE FRENCH PICTURES

MUCH more than in the Spanish Room we have here the sense that we are in a day of lesser things, of a declining wave of artistic power, and without a painter such as Velasquez, that to some extent escapes from category, we feel very definitely that what saves the finer painters—and there are some that are exquisite—from the slackness of their time is almost always their conservatism or their modesty. Has the reader ever observed in a modestly undulating landscape the distressing effect of a lot of small buildings all standing erect and trying to be as tall as possible, like so many tombstones in a superior cemetery, instead of quietly following the lie of the land, utilising a natural elevation as base for the highest building, not dissipating effort in monotonous competition? It is with something of the gratitude that the traveller feels for such suitable building that one approaches the work of so exquisite an artist as Claude. His art is limited in its aim, but we can hardly praise him enough for this fact, which indicates not want of ambition but a sense of the fitness of things and of the limitations of his environment, and his refusal to waste energy in ill-placed and impracticable enterprise at a time when energy needed to be consolidated does him infinite credit.

Cephalus and Procris may be taken as about the high-water mark of his effort and surely one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. I have called him conservative, and if we see him in comparison with the figure painting of his time we find his canvases almost more akin to the primitives by the delicate nicety of his touch. See in this picture the firmness with which the great mass of dark foliage is painted in perfect breadth but as perfect clarity—how much more like the perfection of quiet growth that we see in Nature than the slap-dash generalisation in vogue to-day, how much more precious by that quality of intention in every touch that I have before alluded to, how full and strong in colour. Look at the light and open foliage that terminates this mass to the beholder's right (about the middle of the picture), with its suggestion of screen behind screen of leaves swaying in different directions in the breeze, one transparent fan crossing another; look at the delightful sally of leaves coming into the picture from the extreme right, a golden shower of palm-like foliage, and say whether the modern system of painting sky *over* the tree masses is not destructive of many of the most delicate qualities of landscape painting. In all this Claude is simply continuing the early tradition of landscape painting as we see it tentatively foreshadowed in such a picture as Bellini's *Peter Martyr* (No. 812) with its delicious grove of softly moving trees, introducing indeed a greater power of chiaroscuro, but again with infinite moderation. He is also a lesson to modern painters

in showing what beautiful effects of light may be obtained while still observing the tendency of natural objects to remain compactly together in colour. He thus keeps a dignity and serenity that is denied to the fidgety, disintegrated painting of modern Impressionism, where unity is secured by the presence throughout the canvas of all the primaries in varying quantity. Throughout Claude is guided in his balancing of conservatism and innovation by a poetic insight that makes him the standard by which we measure other landscape painters. His figures are usually poor, and, indeed, added by some one else with little understanding of Claude's restrained power. In the *Cephalus and Procris* they are unusually good, but in the *View in Rome* (No. 1319) they are masterly, recalling Watteau in their harmony of deep rose and grey and coral. Except the *Cephalus and Procris*, this is perhaps the most beautiful of the Claudes, with its serene distance of architecture rising quietly against the evening sky, its sober foliage seen between tall columns, its dark grass studded with starlike flowers, amongst which, in solemn elegance, lies the fallen fragment of a capital. To write all this is after all but cataloguing the subject, but how shall one describe the manner in which the painter has caught the stillness as well as the glow of the sunset hour when the air is indeed charged with colour, yet not with the mechanical and fretful iridescence with which modern painting has endowed this time of day? Every object retains soberly its colour, and the gleam of the magic hour is expressed by the subtle way in which Claude has gauged to a nicety just how much colour each will borrow from sunlit clouds or sky.

We all know the historic rivalry between Turner and his great predecessor, which we need not regret since it has endowed us with the magnificent *Dido* of the former, hanging beside Claude's great picture of a similar subject. Honours are about even, for the Turner is *enlevé* with magnificent enthusiasm, but technically considered, it is a patched and mended thing beside Claude's serene perfection, badly marred though, unfortunately as the latter is by figures of by no means unerring rightness from another hand. Gaspar Poussin, more purely an imitator, is more markedly his inferior, pushing his contrasts in more melodramatic fashion, and not achieving the sustained quietness of Lorraine. See in the *Abraham and Isaac* for example, which is perhaps Poussin at his best, how scale is obtained by sheer bulk of the great tree whose rounded contour and the similar forms in the sky contrast too obviously with the simple lines of that limpid blue distance borrowed from Claude, and with the great straight slope up which the figures are hurrying, and then compare with it the *Cave of Adullam*, balancing it, where the stateliness and severity of the principal tree support the straight lines of the distance, giving the picture quietness and leisure. Claude sustains the severity of line in his pictures to such an extent that he can paint you brand-new architecture that yet takes its place quietly in the scheme. In the ordinary modern landscapes if you ruled a straight line along an horizon of sea the picture would vanish into a tumble of disjointed forms.

Pre-eminently too among landscape painters his is the manner of painting that makes it possible to suggest what I have never seen him actually attempt—the crisp beauty of spring when each leaf leaps out in immaculate perfection.

Watteau, whose name I just invoked in vain, is the only painter of the French Renaissance with a poetical genius at all comparable with that of Claude. It seems hard to bring no more definite charge against a painter than lack of inspiration, yet that is really almost one's case when speaking of Nicholas Poussin; he undertook to carry on the work of a man of greater vitality than himself—always a dangerous undertaking. Yet he was an admirable painter with a fine sense of the position of the happy mean in things technical, and his pictures show that in what concerns the actual putting of paint on canvas, "the secret of Titian" did not altogether die with him. He composes his pictures with fine solidity, expressing his figures very cleverly in the few tones that he can afford them, never guilty of tampering with their simplicity by breaking holes in them as the modern painter so often does to relieve some trumpery detail. One thinks of him as a sturdy old chap, immensely valuable as a moral influence; and to whom even so late as the day before yesterday two of the biggest painters that France has produced, Puvis de Chavannes and Jean François Millet, were largely indebted—both rising occasionally to the loftier heights, but neither so reliably sound as technical craftsmen.

What Poussin wanted was just what was possessed by the brothers Lenain—an intense interest in their subject-matter. I have spoken of the first-hand devotion to Nature that is one of the roads to redemption for the artist born in a decadent period. If any one is sceptical as to the truth of the dictum that a painter's state of mind is written indelibly in his paint, let him but compare the little "Lenain" group with, say, the triple portrait of Richelieu, by Philippe de Champagne. We may pass by this historic shade with little compunction, accomplished as the work is, and by no means lacking in seriousness or distinction. It is the work of a *blasé* painter to whom the greater part of what he sees is familiar and not very wonderful. But I defy you once you have looked at him not to feel an intense interest in the boy holding the pitcher to the right of Lenain's picture: the palpitating interest that makes each brush stroke an adventure is here irresistible. The whole picture, though unequal in merit in different parts, is full of the reverence that makes the sense of sight a miracle, and the figure of this boy and the black-haired girl towards the other end of the group are painted with a perfection that no painter could surpass. In the Ionides Collection at South Kensington is a picture by the brothers of some vagrants and a horse's head projecting into the picture which has the same mystic vitality, a vitality almost unearthly, like Rembrandt's work at his best.

This comparatively little known Art finds a successor to some limited extent only in Chardin, who is not well represented here, but it is across in the English Room that we find in Hogarth the man who can most

fairly claim kindred with it. There is something, too, a little similar in the cleverly painted little figures added (as I believe) to the early Velasquez, *Christ in the House of Martha*.

There remain a few pictures that need not detain us long, some brown and shallow compositions by Lancret (not to be compared in interest and respectability with Vernet's excellent craftsmanship and sound observation), second-rate examples of Rigaud and Lebrun (both of whom occasionally have an inkling of that rare gift of painting a woman), and some sweet things by Greuze, able but nauseous. The one illustrated, however, soapy enough as it is in the flesh painting, has yet a certain charm, and the dress is an exquisite passage of painting. There is further a Boucher that tries to be alluring but fails lamentably. Poussin on the same track is better; the nymph and drapery are very good, the satyrs astonishingly weak and soft in characterisation.

The little head of a boy, by Clouet, is beautiful, but that and the little pictures hung by it are better considered along with the German pictures. I confess myself unable to see anything to distinguish the two little pictures by Marmion from Flemish work of the same period; there is even the type of angel that appears in many of Memlinc's pictures, a fact almost proving connection, for no two painters would independently select a model so intrinsically unsuited to the part. Scoffers will say that early French Art is Flemish, and later French Art is Italian. In the German Rooms we shall find German Art that is Flemish too, and better than this.

To come down to modern times, the National Gallery possesses one example, Fantin's portrait of Mrs. Edwards, and it cannot be called an adequate representation of the one country that had the most noticeable Art history during the nineteenth century. Still it is a sterling work, possessing almost all the qualities I hold to be typically British (so unreal are these national distinctions), a picture grave in its domesticity and in its painter's determination to endow every part of it with "quality." As a result it is a little laboured, and the rather heavy corrugated paint is already getting dirty. The woman's face is oddly out of drawing, but full of character and friendliness. Beside any of the pictures of the earlier masters it is necessarily dull in colour with its rather overdone effect of broken colour everywhere, which gives it a rather teased look.

These notes have necessarily been a little scrappy, for the rooms I deal with partake themselves somewhat of that character, but certain general reflections emerge. Murillo and Greuze I regard as people who find their period admirably adapted for their purposes in that following on a succession of great masters they may produce fluent *rechauffés* without ever grappling with the difficulties of observing Nature for themselves, and thus they are able to devote in their paintings all their energies to elaborating the kind of soft and sentimental expressiveness of countenance that would naturally appeal to a mind of that temper; "the swimming horizontal motion of the eyes like a spirit level," as a modern dramatic critic has eloquently described it, is their speciality, and they feel none of "la

haine des élans retombants" that troubled the Duke of Reichstad. These apart, however, we find the painters, whether in France or Spain, who emerge for our admiration, are the men with a keen instinct for their position with regard to the general Art movement, who do not propose to themselves impossibilities. "Il faut cultiver son jardin," they are happiest who like Claude or Lenain are apparently humblest in their ambitions; apparently, I say, for to find one's true position in the general scheme is a fine ambition. We see how mere academic virtues such as Nicolas Poussin possessed will not save the situation, even while we recognise that these may have their utility for future generations who have been fertilised for fresh effort by a season of lying fallow. We see how illusory are the benefits of any sudden progress in the arts, how the habit of painting effects which is zealously *taught* nowadays to Art students (lest their instinct should lead them to attach greater importance to the permanent than to the transitory qualities of things, in a word to recognise the memory of the eye); we see how this habit has led to the loss of many of the most beautiful qualities of painting, and we see with what admirable insight the earlier revolutionists recognised this fact, and tried to stem the tide so that too much time might not be lost in unprofitable and violent extremes. Hardly ever have we found a talent quite naturally and happily flowering, but there is in this mature Art sometimes a charm of its own, as when we see Claude with a talent as fresh as that of a primitive exercising it on themes too complex for any primitive to have grappled with, as when we see Velasquez calmly threading his way to a masterly and most aristocratic Art through a maze of jostling vulgarities. It is a different beauty to the earlier one, but a beauty nevertheless.

THE GERMAN PICTURES

If the pictures we have been discussing in the French and Spanish Schools owed something to foreign influence, they could at least claim a considerable, sometimes a matchless, felicity in borrowing. It is otherwise with Germany, where painting has not only never quite flourished as a spontaneous growth, but has been even less happy in its borrowings from abroad. On entering, however, the room devoted here to German work, one exception jumps to the eyes. Holbein is manifestly not only one of the world's great draughtsmen, as Dürer also might be called, but one of the world's greatest portrait painters too. In no small degree his pictures have the quality that we usually find only in work that has grown up naturally in the artistic atmosphere of general culture, the quality of ease and unconsciousness. This performance of a difficult task as though it were the simplest thing in the world is above all noticeable in his heads, which have an immense individuality and an immense

variety, the result of his power of losing himself in his models, going off into a kind of trance in which everything else is forgotten. But this ease, this spontaneity, often ceases with the painting of the head, the rest of the picture scholarly and distinguished if you like, but hardly showing the same vitality. Compare but for a moment the Duke of Norfolk's matchless *Princess* (to which, though not belonging to the National Collection, one can hardly avoid referring) with the portrait by Lucidel alongside, and you will feel that the latter, less consummate technically, has a naturalness and easy expressiveness in the treatment of the drapery, beside which that of the Holbein is merely accomplished. There can be no question which is the greater work, though Lucidel's is a fine performance, but his very subject hardly permitted him such a triumph as the greater painter achieves, his sitter being after all but a homely German girl, commonplace by comparison with the demure Princess, subtle and shy, whose mystic smile illumines Holbein's picture. Lucidel's portrait, German enough in subject, is most un-German in the quiet success with which it falls into line with Italian painting of the period. The work of an Italianate Fleming, the quiet sumptuosity of his picture accentuates by comparison the difficulty that the Germans experienced in wearing their borrowed finery.

Even of so great a man as Holbein this is true. The figure of Jean de Dinteville in the *Ambassadors* is entirely successful—if meant in burlesque; yet I do not think that it was so meant, but that the artist thought he was creating a noble and imposing figure in this rather awkward and over-dressed young man with the vacuous expression. The picture is an admirable example of how unnecessary violent action is in Art, of what ample dramatic interest arises from the mere juxtaposition of two characters trenchantly stated. We are lost in speculation as to what must have been the relations subsisting between these two so different personalities—the one, physically exuberant, naïve and unconscious intellectually, his eyes vacant, his very hands with so loose a hold on things, the other reserved, secret, dangerous, posed in such characteristic fashion, drawing more tightly round him the sober robe, looking like one of those unfathomable Jews who play, though obscurely, so large a part in the world's tragedies, and keep yet a private life so delicate and refined. This is perhaps the more finely felt of the two faces, the melancholy face of a Duke of dark corners and backstairs, disillusioned but relentless, standing beside the simple and gallant creature that is his tool, who *seems* to act and is happy in the seeming!

It cannot be said that this is a picture that attracts at first sight, with its stupid gawky principal figure, and marred as it is by the introduction in the foreground of a shallow artistic-scientific curiosity unworthy a work of such noble seriousness, but it breathes a full deep sense of life that is very satisfying at times when more sensuous pictures seem shallow, more passionate ones neurotic. There at least is work that aims not, as the modern critic would ask, at the "personal note," but at a full and

complete truthfulness, and not merely that truthfulness to the momentary vision of a scene which so much modern Art has come to consider not merely as the most painting can hope to achieve but the most it should aim at, till in many Art schools the first step in a student's education is the substitution of the photographic for the creative impulse.

It were idle to pretend that the earlier pictures of the German School will be so completely satisfying to the non-specialist visitor as these two superb things of Holbein, yet I should be loth to give them over altogether to the expert disputers over doubtful origins, or to acquiesce in the assumption that to our friend Smith these must necessarily seem simply so many very bad pictures. To appreciate them, however, he must certainly throw over the photographic standard in judging draughtsmanship. Correct foreshortening as we consider it to-day these painters ignored, not merely in the sense of being more or less bunglers at it but in the sense of rarely realising its possibility and even then not regarding it as of much importance. Line with them has its abstract significance even on the flat surface quite apart from its power of rendering a three-dimensioned body, and Nature backs up this assumption of the moral significance of form in most undeniable fashion. Quiet regular growth is associated with smooth and harmonious forms whether in the level undulations of a landscape formed by the slow and gradual attrition of a regular and well-distributed rainfall, or in the placid brows in quiet parallelism with the straight mouth of the peasant woman who has lived a similar life of patience and monotony. Similarly the abruptly contrasting lines of a passionate face are startlingly re-echoed in those of a landscape torn by torrents into frowning ravines.

Not realists but moralists, it mattered little to these painters if a head were in drawing so long as it expressed the state of soul they wanted to express, the moral qualities they held for supremely desirable. In an age of violence and brutality it is natural that gentleness, meekness, a detachment from the things of the flesh, should seem desirable from their very rarity. In a society like ours to-day, when cowardice and physical unfitness flourish under the protection of the State, it is natural that the same qualities no longer strike us as pre-eminently admirable, and it is not altogether an unhealthy sign that such a picture as the Purification of the Virgin, by the "Meister von Liesborn," should strike one (in spite of some feeling of the beauty of those varied tones of white in draperies and architecture and windows) as pre-eminently mawkish. In the other *Presentation in the Temple* (No. 706) the visitor will care less for the principal figures incarnating the religious ideal than for the less important ones where the real character of the models begins to leak out, and in my humble opinion he will be right, in spite of the high value I set on the power of abstraction in its completest development.

But while the type of holiness that was most beloved, *circa* 1460, appeals but little to the man of to-day, and is even a little unintelligible to him, there is comfort for those who would maintain the permanence

of the moral code in finding that depravity remains unshakenly the same, and we understand it perfectly when ably shown. *The Crucifixion* (No. 1049) is one of the most powerful pictures in the room, and its painter, whoever he was, has an understanding of cruel and debased types that Rops or Lautrec could hardly surpass. It is pleasant to fancy how Mr. Ruskin might have fulminated against this work, an orgy of horrors whose every corner is packed with tortured, exasperated forms, screaming discords of conflicting line. Look at the twisting madness in the figures of the thieves, of which it is difficult to say which is the finer. Look, but as a single example, at the blatant depravity of the man's head just behind—no, butting up against—the foot of the thief to the spectator's right, and say if we have not been hasty in fancying " la peinture rosse " an invention of the end of the nineteenth century.

The art of illumination is evidently the base of many of these works as well as of one of the little pictures in the French Room (where also we find Clouet, a thinner and more meticulous Holbein and Marmion, a not very inspired offshoot of Memlinc), and the use of gold that they inherit from that art is very variedly and beautifully exploited in some of these German pictures. In the *Presentation at the Temple*, already cited, a most beautiful picture, it makes a scheme of exquisite fairness with the reds, greens and whites of the dresses. In the *Mass of St. Hubert* it is lurid and fantastic like an *auto da fe*, in Baldung's *Pietà* the halos are like pale candle flames. Among the pictures most definitely rewarding to the appreciative art lover we must also mention a remarkable triptych of Flemish character with a delightful illuminated church in the background, the execution of the figures hardly up to the general conception of the picture. Beside a genial little portrait of a man by Lucas Cranach, Dürer's portrait of his father is the single but most satisfactory representative of the work of that great draughtsman ; here the voluminous detail of an over-scientific painting is saved for the nonce by a touch of tragic sympathy.

THE SPANISH, FRENCH AND GERMAN SCHOOLS OF PAINTING

LIST OF PAINTERS AND THEIR PICTURES AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

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MORALES, LUIS DE. Called "el Divino." 1509?–1586.
The Virgin and Child. 1229.

THÉOTOCÓPULI, DOMENICO (el Griego, il Greco). 1548–1625.
St. Jerome (?) 1122.
Christ driving out the Traders from the Temple. 1457.

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A Betrothal. 1434.
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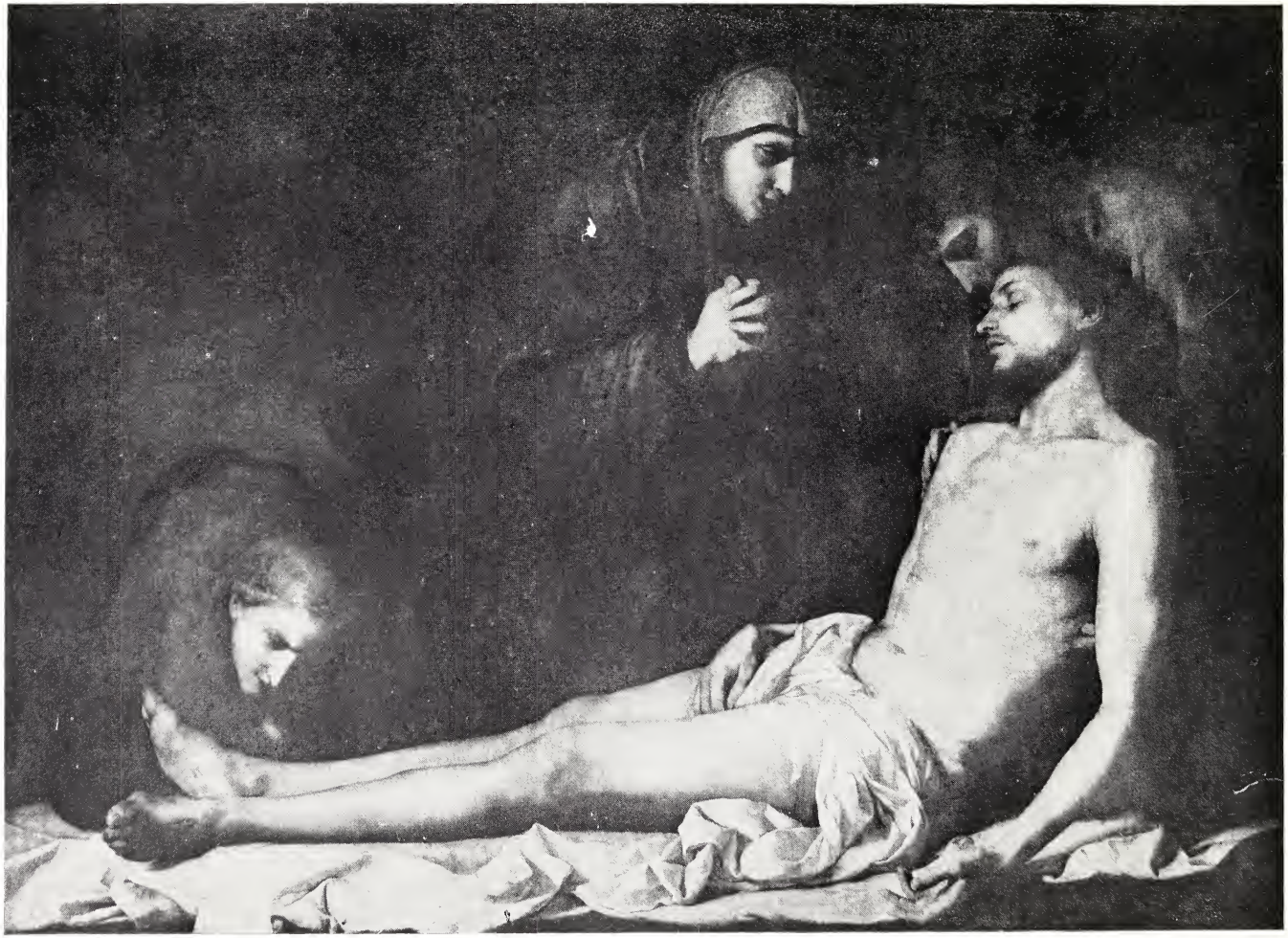
Photo, Hanfstaengl

PORTRAIT OF A CARDINAL (ST. JEROME)
BY DOMENICO THÉOTOCÓPULI (EL GRIEGO)

Photo, Hanfstaengl

CHRIST DRIVING OUT THE TRADERS FROM THE TEMPLE
BY DOMENICO THÉOTOCÓPULI (EL GRIEGO)



Photo, Hanfstaengl

THE DEAD CHRIST
BY JOSEF DE RIBERA

Photo, Newnes

PORTRAIT OF A LADY
BY FRANCISCO ZURBARAN

Photo, Hanfstaengl

THE BOAR HUNT
BY DON DIEGO VELASQUEZ

Photo, Mansell

PHILIP IV. OF SPAIN
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Photo, Braun, Clément

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THE SPANISH ADMIRAL
ADRIAN PULIDO PAREJA
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VENUS AND CUPID
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THE HOLY FAMILY
BY BARTOLOMÉ E. MURILLO

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A SPANISH PEASANT BOY
BY BARTOLOMÉ E. MURILLO

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ST. JOHN AND THE LAMB
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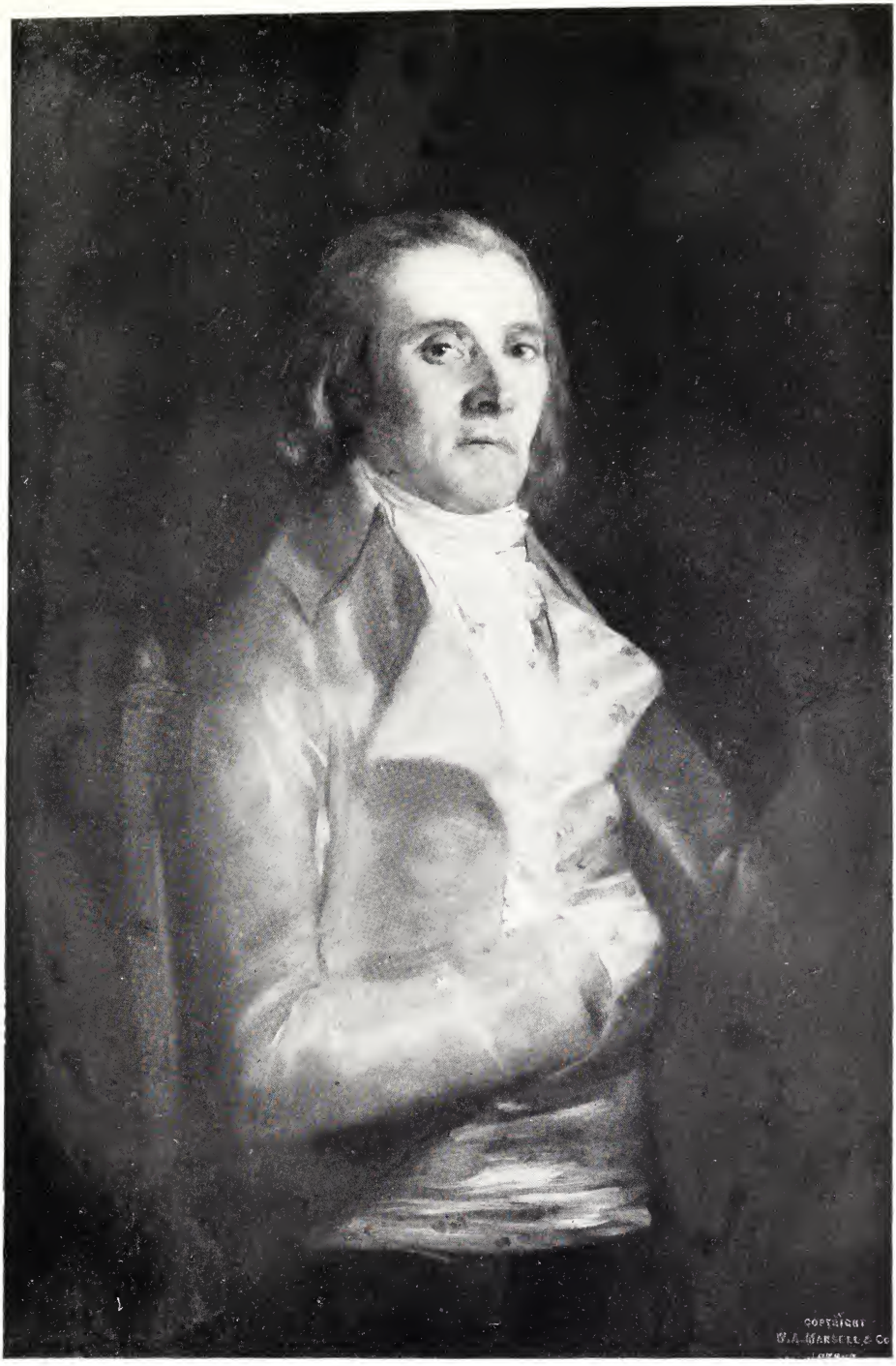
A BOY DRINKING
BY BARTOLOMÉ E. MURILLO



Photo, Mansell

PORTRAIT OF DR. PÉRAL
BY FRANCISCO JOSÉ DE GOYA

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VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH SAINTS
FRENCH SCHOOL XV. CENTURY

Photo, Braun, Clément

PORTRAIT OF A MAN
ASCRIBED TO FRANÇOIS CLOUET

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PASTORAL LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES, ILLUSTRATING
THE RECONCILIATION OF CEPHALUS AND PROCRIS
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SEAPORT, WITH FIGURES, REPRESENTING THE EMBARKATION OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA, ON THE OCCASION OF HER VISIT TO SOLOMON
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LANDSCAPE, WITH FIGURES, CAVE OF ADULLAM
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LANDSCAPE AND VIEW IN ROME
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A LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES, REPRESENTING
ABRAHAM AND ISAAC GOING TO THE SACRIFICE
BY GASPARD DUGHET (POUSSIN)

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CASTLE OF SANT' ANGELO, ROME
BY CLAUDE JOSEPH VERNET

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THE HEAD OF A GIRL
BY JEAN BAPTISTE GREUZE

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HEAD OF A GIRL LOOKING UP
BY JEAN BAPTISTE GREUZE

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GIRL WITH AN APPLE
BY JEAN BAPTISTE GREUZE

Photo, Hanfstaengl

A YOUNG GIRL CARRYING A LAMB
BY JEAN BAPTISTE GREUZE

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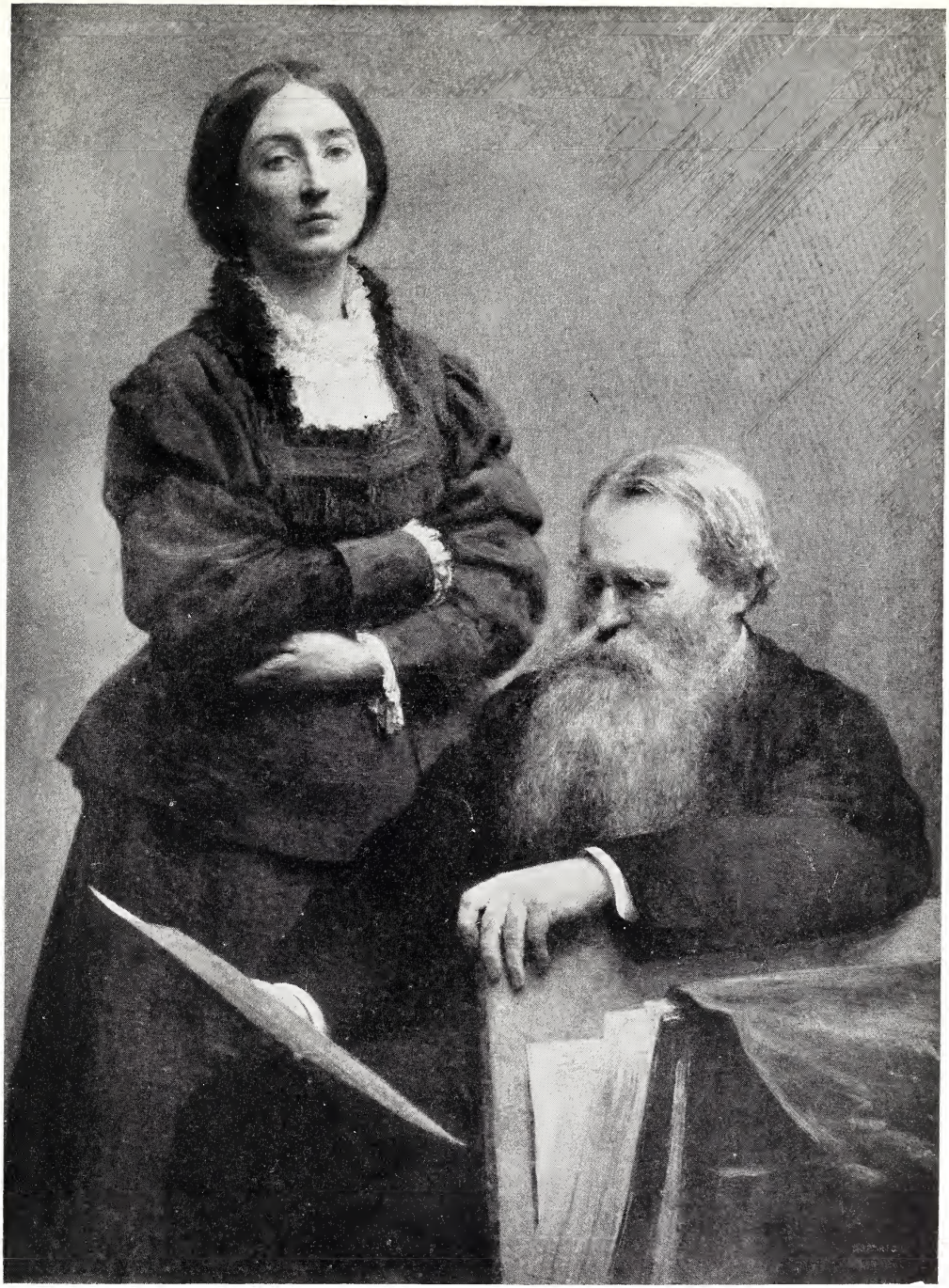
PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
BY MADAME VIGÉE LE BRUN



Photo, Mansell

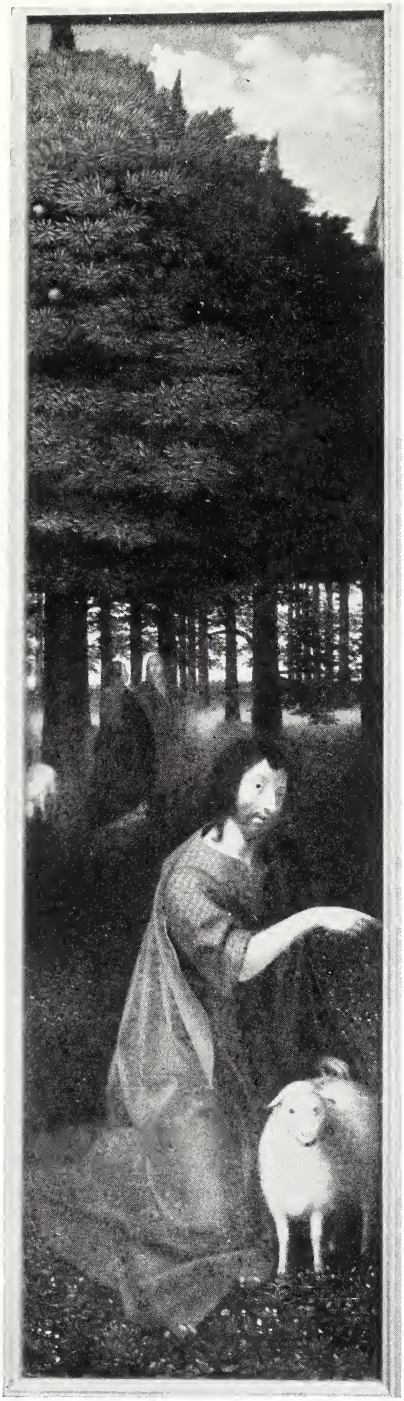
PORTRAITS OF MR. AND MRS. EDWARDS
BY HENRI FANTIN-LATOUR

Photo, Mansell

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE
BY THE MASTER OF THE "LYVERSBERG PASSION"

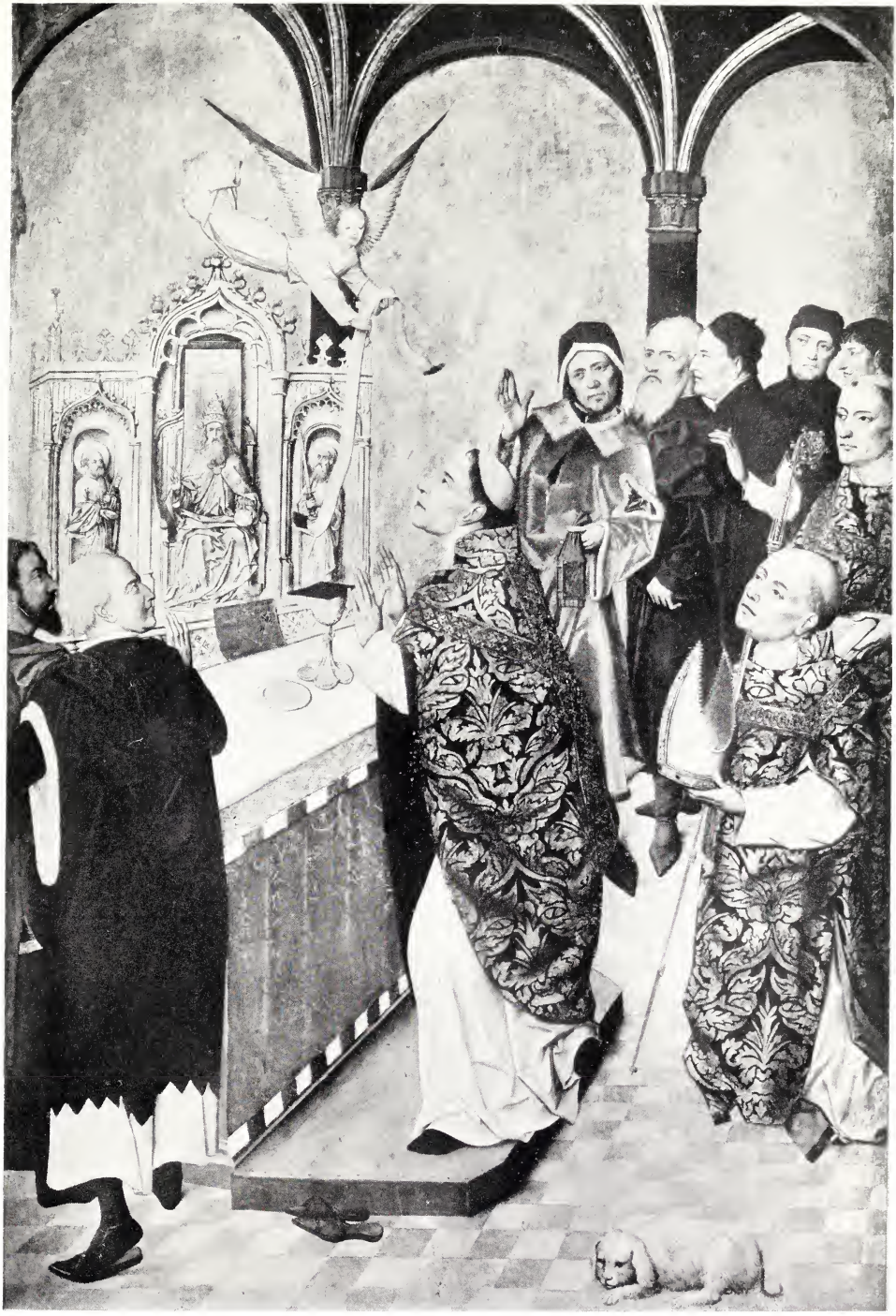
Photo, Mansell

THE VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH OTHER FIGURES
SCHOOL OF THE LOWER RHINE



Photo, Mansell

THE VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH OTHER FIGURES (DETAILS)
SCHOOL OF THE LOWER RHINE



Photo, Mansell

THE MASS OF ST. HUBERT
BY THE MEISTER VON WERDEN

Photo, Hanfstaengl

THE CRUCIFIXION
WESTPHALIAN SCHOOL XV. CENTURY

Photo, Hanfstaengl

THE CRUCIFIXION (DETAIL)
WESTPHALIAN SCHOOL XV. CENTURY

Photo, Hanfstaengl

THE CRUCIFIXION (DETAIL)
WESTPHALIAN SCHOOL XV. CENTURY

Photo. Newnes

PORTRAIT OF A LADY
GERMAN SCHOOL XV.–XVI. CENTURY

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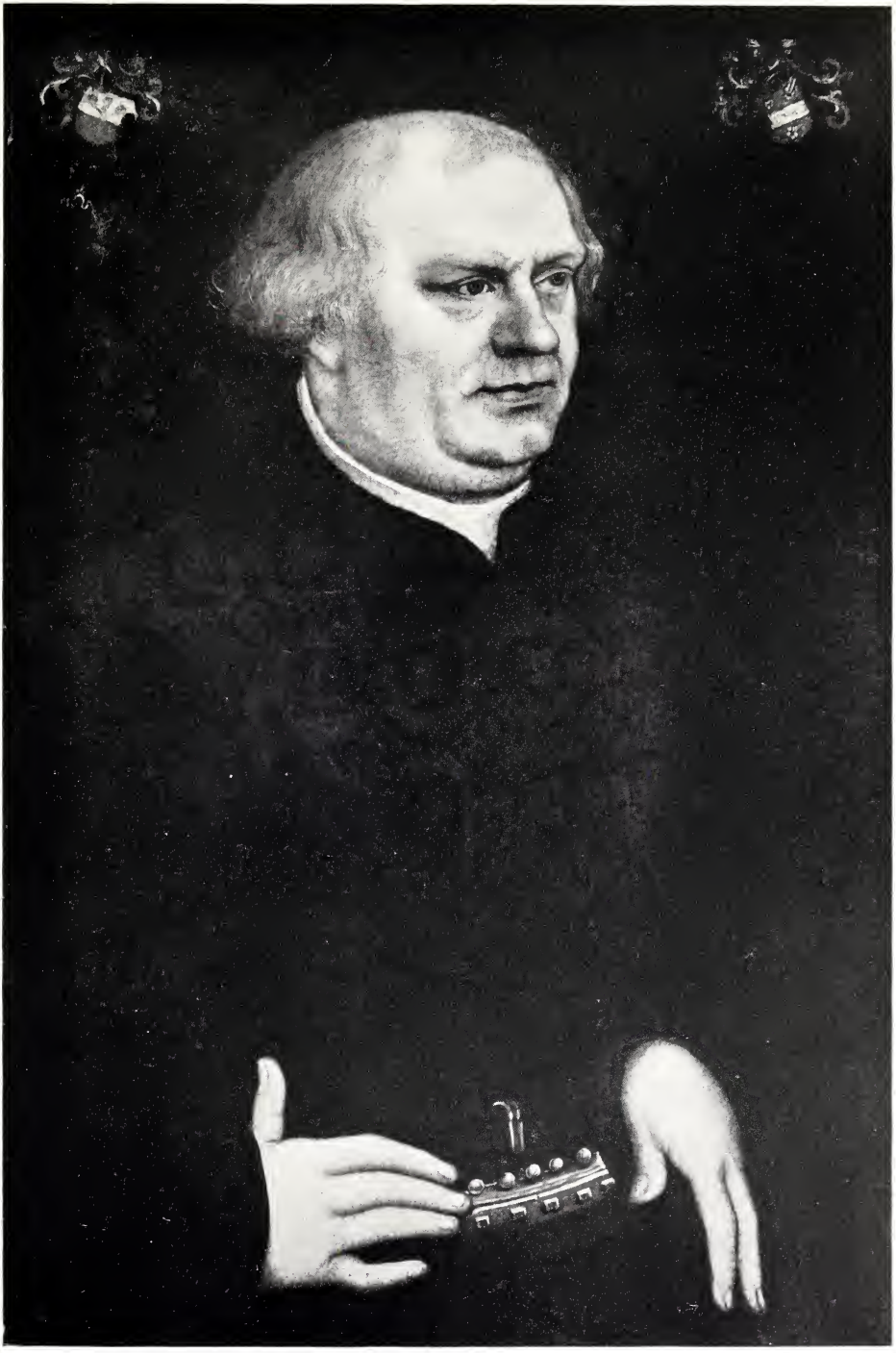
PORTRAIT OF HIS FATHER
BY ALBRECHT DÜRER



Photo, Newnes

PORTRAIT OF A MAN
BY LUCAS CRANACH (THE ELDER)

Photo, Hanfstaengl

"THE AMBASSADORS" (DETAIL)
BY HANS HOLBEIN

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"THE AMBASSADORS" (DETAIL)
BY HANS HOLBEIN

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